

# **St. Louis' Substance Abuse and HIV/AIDS Prevention Faith Mentoring Project**



**Missouri Institute of Mental Health  
University of Missouri - Columbia**

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# Goals of This Session

- To provide information on the relationship between HIV/AIDS and substance abuse
- To present an overview of a new faith-based project designed for African American girls that integrates substance abuse prevention with HIV/AIDS prevention
- To discuss the importance of involving the faith community in HIV/AIDS and substance abuse prevention
- To offer tips for identifying faith organizations interested in addressing these issues





# HIV/AIDS & Substance Abuse

## Some Known Facts

- Between 1.1 and 1.5 million people in U.S. are injection drug users
- Costing society an estimated \$58.3 billion each year
- More than 200,000 (or 32%) reported AIDS cases in U.S. are among injection drug users





# Facts Related to Women

- In the U.S., of the 98,468 reported AIDS cases among adult/adolescent females, HIV was transmitted through injection drug use in 44% of them. More than 4,000 of these cases were reported in 1997 alone.
- Injection drug use is the number one mode of transmission of HIV/AIDS for women in America.





# More Facts Related to Women

- Women who engage in sexual intercourse with injection drug using partners may be unaware of their risk of contracting HIV. By the end of 1997, 16,800 women had been reported to have acquired AIDS in this manner.
- 91% of all children reported with AIDS and 86% of all children reported to currently be infected with HIV were born to HIV-positive mothers. In 40% of the AIDS cases and 32% of the HIV cases, the mothers were injection drug users.





# HIV/AIDS & Substance Use

## More Facts

- HIV/AIDS increasing most rapidly among people of color
- African Americans & Latinos have higher prevalence rates than Caucasians
- HIV/AIDS number one cause of death among African American males between 25 and 44 years old





## Facts Related to African Americans

Injection drug use among the African American population accounts for 13% of all reported AIDS cases in the U.S. According to the Centers for Disease Control, HIV was transmitted through injection drug use in 60,118 cases of AIDS in African American men and 24,981 cases in African American women.





## More Fact Related to African Americans

- In 1997, approximately one fifth of reported AIDS cases among women were in African American female injection drug users.
- In 1997, approximately 14% of reported AIDS cases among men were in African American males with injection drug use as a risk factor.





## Facts Related to Adolescents

- Injection drug use was a mode of exposure for almost 23% of reported AIDS cases among adolescents and adults under age 25.
- Approximately 1 out of every 50 high school students has reported injecting an illegal drug.






## More Facts About Adolescents

- Two thirds of all high school seniors have had sexual intercourse, 23% have had sex with four or more partners, and many reported having sex under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Alcohol and illegal drugs lower inhibitions and influence young adults to have sex without protecting themselves against STDs or HIV.





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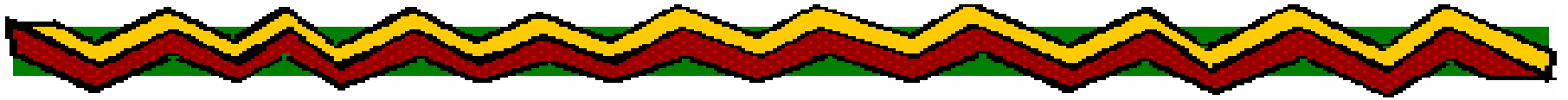


# Introduction

To stop the progression of the disproportionately high HIV/AIDS rate among African American women, the Missouri Institute of Mental Health in collaboration with 10 African American churches will implement a faith-based, gender specific integrated HIV/AIDS & drug abuse prevention project for 10 - 16 year-old girls in St. Louis.

Project funded by the Department of Health and Human Services,  
Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration,  
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention.





**Churches, mentors, & girls recruited from  
the following zip code areas:**

*63104 • 63106 • 63107 • 63108*

*63110 • 63112 • 63113 • 63115*

*63116 • 63121 • 63130 • 63136*





# Project Collaborators

- Bureau of Family & Community Health-City of St. Louis  
Department of Health
- 22nd Judicial Circuit Court of the Missouri Family Court-  
Juvenile Division
- Committed Caring Faith Communities
- Missouri Department of Mental Health-Division of  
Alcohol and Drug Abuse
- ARCHS (*Area Resources for Community & Human Services*)
- State of Missouri Department of Health and Senior  
Services-Office of Minority Health and Senior Services





# AIM

- To develop a faith-based integrated HIV/AIDS and substance abuse prevention program
- To implement bonding activities for girls and mentors
- To measure girls' attitudes & behaviors before and after a 7-month intervention





# TARGET



**150  
African  
American  
Girls**





# Intervention

## A seven-month series of:

- > Creating Lasting Family Connections
- > Be Proud! Be Responsible!
- > HIV Information Forums
- > Bonding/Mentoring Activities





# Outcomes

- > Reduced drug use & risky sexual behavior
- > Increased knowledge of risks associated with drug use and sexual activity
- > Less favorable attitudes toward drug use & adolescent sexual activity
- > Increased confidence
- > Improved resistance skills
- > Interpersonal bonds between mentors & girls over time





# Girls Holla Back!

A series of 13 insightful HIV & drug abuse prevention workshop sessions complemented with fun-filled mentoring activities hosted for female adolescents and teenagers.





# Girls Holla Back!

- For:** Females ages 10 - 16 years  
*Residing in the targeted zip code areas.*
- Where:** UMSL South Campus  
University Conferences & Inn
- When:** *Cohort I: August 2003 - February 2004*  
*2nd & 4th Saturday of Each Month*
- Cohort II: April 2004 - October 2004*  
*2nd & 4th Saturday of Each Month*
- Time:** 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

***No Participation Fee & Lunch Provided at No Cost!***





## Why Involve Faith Organizations in Substance Abuse/HIV Prevention Efforts?

- Faith communities are making major contributions to the welfare of their communities through a combination of social and spiritual ministries.
- **95% of Americans believe in God and 92% are affiliated with a specific religion** (*CASA, 2001*).
- In some communities, the faith organization represents the hub of the neighborhood. There are between 200,000 and 300,000 congregations in the United States. The faith community can be powerful and influential.





# **Why Involve Faith Organizations in Substance Abuse/HIV Prevention Efforts?**

- Spirituality is a protective factor that helps decrease the likelihood that youth will use alcohol or other drugs. Faith organizations are chief conveyers of spiritual values in many communities.
- Within faith organizations is a diversity of people who have the skills that can be useful in prevention efforts (e.g., teachers, physicians, youth, members of recovery community, people who are HIV+ or are living with AIDS, coaches, musicians).





# **Why Involve Faith Organizations in Substance Abuse/HIV Prevention Efforts?**

- **In some cultures, people will seek help from the church for a variety of social service needs before going to a government agency or public facility. Clergy are front line workers who get invited to places social service agency personnel do not.**
- **Clergy often have the power to mobilize the community around a particular issue such as substance abuse or HIV/AIDS.**
- **Faith organizations can bring resources to the table such as meeting facilities and volunteers.**
- **Because of their spiritual acumen, some faith organizations understand the spiritual aspects of recovery.**





# Barriers

- Lack of education, training, and resources
- Fear
- Don't know what to do or how to help
- Difficulty in addressing issues of sex and sexuality
- Attitudes and beliefs about homosexuality
- Theology of sin and interpretation of scriptures
- Some faith organizations do not have a presence in the community where they are located
- Intolerance of people who practice another religion





# Barriers

- Belief that addiction is lack of willpower
- Belief that AIDS is a plague from God to punish the sinful
- Stigma and discrimination within our faith institutions
- Judgmental attitudes and behavior
- 94.4% of clergy surveyed by CASA consider substance abuse and addiction to be important issues they confront, but only 12.5% completed coursework during their theological studies and only 36.5% preach a sermon addressing the issue more than once a year





# Barriers

- Clergy have busy schedules and are asked to address a multitude of social service issues
- Smaller faith organizations do not have access to technology need to keep abreast of developments in the field of SAP/HIVP
- Congregations are not ready
- Belief that substance abuse and HIV/AIDS are the responsibility of the government and not the responsibility of religious institutions
- Unaware of the prevalence of these problems





# Tips on Involving Faith Community



- Seek out faith organizations that are already doing something in the area of SAP/HIVP.
- Solicit the assistance of members of the recovery community or individuals who are HIV+ within congregations in trying to reach the pastor, rabbi, spiritual leader.
- Prepare the congregation for involvement in SAP/HIVP by educating them about these issues.
- Help congregations understand why their involvement is crucial.





# Tips on Involving Faith Community



- Don't always expect the faith community to provide its services for free – we pay other professions for their services and we ask religious institutions to do a lot.
- Get to know the religious institution before inviting it to become part of the project – some faith organizations do not work with people from religions different from their own because they believe it goes against the gospel.





# Tips on Involving Faith Community



- Offer to provide training for the faith organization – do not assume that because they run a religious institution that they know how to collaborate or help manage a grant project.
- Be prepared to provide ongoing technical assistance to the faith organization.





# Tips on Involving Faith Community



- Don't overlook the small religious institutions.
- Remember that some clergy hold full-time jobs outside of the religious institution.
- Consider that religious institutions might be afraid to get involved in SAP/HIVP efforts because they don't know what to do.





# Tips on Involving Faith Community



- Help faith organizations explore ways to incorporate prevention into what they already are doing.
- Understand that some religious institutions don't have the resources to run ongoing programs, but they might be able to manage one activity or event a year or to provide volunteers to support the efforts of other organizations.





# Tips on Involving Faith Community



- Understand that there might be turf issues among various faith organizations in the community.
- Find out the faith organization's denominational policy regarding the use of alcohol or other drugs and HIV/AIDS.
- Help create a dialogue between congregations and substance abuse treatment and HIV/AIDS prevention or treatment service agencies.
- Food can often be a motivator to get people to meetings.





# Identifying Likely Faith Organizations for Community Involvement



- Do they have peer ministry or similar program to assist those addicted to alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs or who are HIV+?
- Do they offer youth and adult study of the holy scriptures related to SAP/HIVP?
- Do they offer training for their leaders related to substance abuse or HIV/AIDS?
- Do they offer occasional informational or educational sermons related to substance abuse or HIV/AIDS?





# Identifying Likely Faith Organizations for Community Involvement



- Do they have a communion policy sensitive to recovering alcoholics?
- Do they have information in their church library on addiction or HIV/AIDS?
- Do they encourage involvement in community prevention programs?
- Do they understand the disease concept of addiction?





# Resources



- **Balm in Gilead** (not for profit New York based organization working to prevent the transmission of HIV among African people by mobilizing the religious community) (212) 730-7381 or 888-225-6243 – website [www.balmingilead.org](http://www.balmingilead.org)
- **CDC National Prevention Information Network** (provides information, publications and technical assistance on AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases and tuberculosis) 800-458-5231- website [www.cdcnpin.org](http://www.cdcnpin.org).





# Resources



**Council of Religious AIDS Networks** (mission – to be an open and respectful forum that empowers and mobilizes prophetic witness and ministries by faith communities in response to the global HIV/AIDS pandemic) website – [www.aidsfaith.com](http://www.aidsfaith.com)





# Resources



**National Native American AIDS Prevention Center –**  
(510) 444-2051

**Innovative HIV Service Delivery Models for Native  
American Communities – website**

[http://hab.hrsa.gov/special/innovative\\_overview.htm](http://hab.hrsa.gov/special/innovative_overview.htm)

**Asian Language Project** (on-line AIDS information  
resource developed by and for Asians and Pacific  
Islanders) website – <http://www.critpatch.org/alp/>





# **For More Information Contact:**

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